

NATO VETERANS ORGANIZATION OF CANADA (NVOC)

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE (SEPTEMBER 2018)

If you want to go fast, go alone - If you want to go far, go together

Friends and members - many of you have contacted me with concerns about a "criminal" serving a life sentence for murder and who is getting financial support from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) for PTSD treatments. The Directors have made a decision to not send a letter to the Minister given that he is already addressing this issue. I did raise this as being a concern with the Deputy Minister and some of his officials when we met this week (Sept 19th). I have been told that when a health care professional who is treating a *veteran* and who recommends that a family member also get treatment in order to make further treatment success for the *veteran* – then a decision to provide support may be made. Not really sure what this actually means? The primary focus is always on the veteran. A very sensitive issue.

In no particular order of importance, here are some thoughts and information that I hope will be of interest to you. **A reminder that NVOC is a non-partisan "Advocacy" organization.** We do not support one political party or another and we stay out of political discussions. Some of you want us to become more involved in partisan activities and to join with various groups or organizations that seek to "Lobby". We remain focussed on Long Term Home Care and we deal with that issue as our primary effort. Long Term Care is coming later into veterans lives [The Veterans Independence Program is helping veterans stay longer at home] .

ISSUE's are non-partisan for us. That was an original "tenet" (a principle or belief honoured by a group of people) of our founders.

Veterans Service Cards

These are not Identification Cards - an Identification Card requires a new photo every five years - hence the card is a "Veterans Service Card" issued by the CF. There will be no cost to the veteran and there is no expiry date.

Our small organization did advocate strongly for a retired [with or without a pension] card that recognized status as a veteran. In April we made a presentation to the Federal Retirees Association about the importance. The card should be more than just getting a CF member – after service – into a US military golf course or PX! If 7,000 members release each year – the old NDI 75 stopped being issued in 2006 – that means about 90,000 veterans will need the “new” card. Progress is slow but is happening.

The CAF is re-introducing the NDI 75 as a Veteran Service Card intended to acknowledge the service of members and to encourage an enduring affiliation with the CAF. This message provides you notice of the imminent implementation of the NDI 75 Veteran's Service Card (VSC) which is a replacement to the former NDI 75 Record of Service Card. Eligibility for this card shall be aligned with the VAC definition of a veteran and be issued to all CAF members who successfully completed BMQ/BMOQ & honourably released under items 3, 4 or 5. Essentially, Release Staff shall send an email to NDIS with basic information, NDIS will produce the card and send it to the Release Staff for presentation during the final release interview in exchange for the NDI 20/10.

The rollout of the NDI 75 VSC will be conducted in the stages defined below, where the immediate concern will be with Stage 1.

Stage 1: CAF member releasing with a final release date, or final release interview, of 4 September 2018 onwards – Release Sections & Reserve Units. If a member's release date is 31 August 2018 or prior, they shall be included in Stage 2. Release staff are to follow the attached SOP;

Stage 2: CAF members who released between 01 February 2016 and 03 September 2018 – Central process will be completed via HRMS Data Extract and members will apply via an online portal; and

Stage 3: Any former CAF member released prior to 01 February 2016 who did not receive an NDI 75 due to the previous qualifying thresholds. These varied over the years where the most recent NDI 75 was 10 years of service – Central process which will require a team enabled to verify data in PERMIS, at LAC or with VAC.

The first NDI 75s are to be issued as of 04 September 2018. Your immediate assistance is required as card production and mailing can take up to 3 weeks; staff are to immediately commence sending NDI 75 VSC requests IAW with the attached SOP to ensure NDIS has sufficient time to produce and distribute the cards to your sections.

Veterans who are not covered in Stage 1, please inform them that information about these Stages will be promulgated by DND/CAF once procedures have been more fully developed. At which point the DND/CAF will promulgate direction and resource access to all former CAF members through either Stage 2 or Stage 3. A general inquiry NDI 75 telephone line is to be created for Stages 2 and 3 and will be disseminated as soon as available. Lastly, amendments to MHRRP, CFAO 15-2, CANFORGEN and various form updates shall be completed in due course.

National Association of Federal Retirees (NAFR)

Serving You Because You SERVED CANADA (Extracted from the NAFR "SAGE magazine" Fall 2018 edition)

QUOTE: "The National Association of Federal Retirees has reached out to Air Canada and other Canadian Airlines to accept a new Federal Retirees Canadian Armed Forces veteran membership card. If you are a member of NAFR and a CAF veteran, **this new card will qualify you for an enhanced baggage allowance**. UNQUOTE. They included a tear out insert for applications for the card.

NOTE: I found it interesting that the NAFR included in the tear-out - Are you a: (check one)

- Pensioned veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces; or
- Non-pensioned veteran (Classification or trades qualified, and honourably released).

We continue to advocate for a "One Veteran standard" where a veteran is a veteran – pensioned or not! We do have some concerns about an Association issuing a Veterans card. Will there be a careful vetting process to ensure that applications are in fact made by legitimate veterans?

General Information

- The Minister VAC and the Deputy Minister have held 41 "**Town Hall**" meetings with veterans across the nation so far this year. Reception has been active and positive. The Royal Canadian Legion Convention in Winnipeg had the two of them speak - a very warm reception from Legion members. There will be a two day "National Summit" in Ottawa 29/30 October. No agenda yet but I anticipate that NVOC will have two spots. I would also anticipate that homeless veterans and communications outreach will be discussed.;
- **Service Dogs** continue to be under consideration. A Tax credit for service dogs is in place now. My understanding is that there is no consensus within the "Dog" community about standards. It is not enough to have dogs - there must be a tie in with professional therapists and there is considerable economic competitiveness! Of interest is that Canada is the only country looking into "equine" therapy for veterans (Horses). Again it is not enough to have a horse ranch in Alberta - it also must be tied in with medical professionals. The horses don't get paid - the medical professionals who use horses will be funded [perhaps?].;
- **Veterans** - the average age of release from the CAF is 37 and the average age of people making claims to VAC is in the early 50's. In 2018 there will be over 60,000 claims made to VAC. Almost double from a decade ago. Fewer VAC decisions are being appealed - the quality of assessment of claims has improved. A good trend for veterans. Amongst the 670,000 veterans there are a great variety of "issues". There is always focus on the veteran - different needs at different times along life's timeline. Some veterans have families in the care of social services. Homeless veterans continue to be a worry. Health care is a provincial

- responsibility but the Federal Government pays "provinces" for enhanced mental health care for veterans.
- **Social Covenant for Veterans**. The federal government brought in a new scheme for benefits and compensation, called the "New Veterans Charter," on April 1, 2006. It provided for lump sum disability payments and earnings loss benefits for Canadian Forces members and veterans who suffered from disabilities related to their service. Prior to the New Veterans Charter, disability pensions were provided under the *Pension Act*. The British Columbia Court of Appeal struck down a potential class action by members of the Canadian Forces against the federal government's current compensation scheme for veterans (December 2017). The plaintiffs in the case argued the new benefits were inferior, not only in terms of the benefits provided previously but also in comparison to compensation available to injured workers under provincial compensation regimes. The Supreme Court of Canada has rejected the White Rock-based Equitas Society's bid to pursue an appeal for its class-action lawsuit on behalf of disabled Canadian Armed Forces veterans (August 2018). When the Prime Minister spoke to Canadian military members just before the Battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917 his "speech" was not a law [with Parliamentary approvals]. The obligations by the Government for veterans is laid out by Parliament. This issue was raised by some of you. The BC Court of Appeal decision is worth reading. http://veteranvoice.info/archive/18feb_Equitascourtofappeal.pdf
 - **Discipline amongst veterans**. VAC does not have an Inspector General or a Command Sgt Major and can not correct what some veterans do. There are veterans who claim service related injury for ships they have never sailed on and deployments they have not done. There is a group that watches for fake veterans (Stolen Valour. <https://www.stolenvalour.ca/index.php/category/stolen-valour/>). We need to be vigilant and to support other like minded veterans organizations.
 - **Marijuana**. The CAF has issued policy directions on the use of marijuana amongst serving members. Canada is one of three nations that are providing medical marijuana to veterans - we pay for up to 3 gms a day [I am told that this amount is a large amount - would fill a coffee mug?]. (Israel gives up to 1 1/2 grams and the Dutch give a little over 1 gram). I am also told that marijuana only really helps in two areas - palliative care and epilepsy. The idea for veterans is to "start low and go slow". People with mental health issues probably should be cautious with marijuana - it masks symptoms and does not treat?
 - **VAC Assistance Service**. 24 hour counselling with a Mental Health Professional. Just call. The first 20 hours are free and if more support is needed it is available, **1-800-268-7708**.

Recommended Reading

"The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada" Edited by Peter Neary and Jack L. Granatstein (1999). ISBN 9780773516786

A collection of essays documenting the establishment of one of the building blocks of the Canadian welfare state. Rehabilitating Canada's soldiers to civilian life following World War II was a massive undertaking. The Veterans Charter, the program devised by the federal government to do this, promised to provide "opportunity with security" and was one of the building blocks of the Canadian welfare state. This collection of essays by some of Canada's leading historians explores the Charter's origins, history, and benefits as well as highlights its role in the development of the Canadian welfare state and postwar society. The achievements of this generation of Canadian soldiers, sailors and airmen are sometimes downplayed; this collection of essays puts their achievements on the historical record and pays tribute to their memory and accomplishments.

Honours and Awards

At the summer luncheon hosted by the Ottawa-Gatineau Unit, the opportunity was given to your Board to make some presentations.

- Our Patron - General [ret] Paul Manson - a framed collection of his military service and his lifetime contribution to Canadian aviation;
- Our Past President, Gord Jenkins was presented a framed "Top Gun" award;
- Out going Director Doug Brunton was presented a framed limited edition Canada Post commemoration of Vimy Ridge;
- Our founding membership leader Betty Goodison was presented a framed "Top Gun" award; and
- Our volunteer webmaster for many years, Mike Bryan was presented a framed "Top Gun" award.

Your Board of Directors does meet monthly and we are always keen to hear from members. You can call me or email with your ideas and suggestions.

Thank you all for your continued support. It is much appreciated.

Randy

Randy Stowell, CD
National President
NATO Veterans Organization of Canada

Telephone 613-269-3374
email: rg.stowell@sympatico.ca

21 September 2018

